

## Hasina's China visit to elevate ties between two countries

Says Chinese minister

UNB, Dhaka

Visiting Minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, Liu Jianchao, has underscored the significance of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's upcoming visit to China in July, which he thinks will help uplift the relationship, engaging in new areas of cooperation for mutual benefit.



Liu Jianchao

"I'm sure that during this visit, the relationship will be uplifted again. We are really grateful for her (PM Hasina) tremendous contributions to China-Bangladesh relations," he said while speaking as the chief guest at a dialogue in the capital yesterday.

Jianchao said that China and Bangladesh are breaking new ground for further and stronger cooperation for mutual benefit.

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Miraj Hossain, 55, had bought this boat eight months ago with Tk 3 lakh to transport goods from the capital to other areas. With more and more people opting to carry their goods in other vessels, such as launches, he was about to lose his livelihood until he had the unique idea of setting up a tea-stall on the boat, moored to a Buriganga bank. For the past four months, Miraj and his son have been making a living through their "floating tea-stall". The photo was taken in Keraniganj yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Banks, NBFIs asked to freeze accounts of Matiur, family

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two financial sector regulators yesterday asked banks and financial institutions to freeze all accounts of revenue official Matiur Rahman and his family members.

These include mobile financial service (MFS) accounts and beneficiary owner (BO) accounts used for investing in the share market.

"We have issued letters to all banks and non-bank financial institutions to freeze the accounts of Matiur Rahman, his two wives, and five children," said a top official of the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) seeking anonymity.

The accounts should remain frozen for 30 days, the BFIU also ordered.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) also blocked the BO accounts of Matiur and his family members, said Rezaul Karim, spokesperson of the stock market regulator.

The banks, non-bank financial institutions, and MFS providers have also been asked to send the details of transactions and account opening data, along with KYC of all accounts of Matiur and family members, to the BFIU in the next five working days.

The development comes after the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) launched an inquiry into the allegations of amassing illegal wealth and money laundering by Matiur.

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## Teachers go on

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said, adding that, however, the scheduled exams were held.

FBUTA will hold similar programmes today and tomorrow.

Teachers of Dhaka University, Jahangirnagar University, Chittagong University, Rajshahi University, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, and Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, among others, took part in the abstention programme yesterday, according to FBUTA.

They are protesting the government decision to include all officers and employees, joining the service of autonomous, self-governing, nationalised, statutory, or similar organisations and their subordinate institutions, under the UPSon or after July 1, 2024.

FBUTA said the teachers who will be newly appointed in public universities will fall under the new pension scheme instead of the current pension facilities offered by the universities.

They fear that many people will not join the teaching profession if the new scheme, which they termed "discriminatory", is implemented.

They have also been demanding the cancellation of the gazette in this regard through several peaceful protests since May 26.

Furthermore, the university teachers also demanded a separate pay scale and the inclusion of professors in the "super" grade.

## New deals

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"The government has completely failed to reach out to India or to have its demands met. You [government] are trying to sign agreements without getting water from the transboundary rivers."

The BNP leader said Bangladesh needs Teesta water first but the government wants to work on a Teesta project. "This is because the project involves a lot of money and the government is targeting that money."

Raising questions about the benefits of the agreements, Fakhrul said, "How will Bangladesh be benefited from the corridors? India will surely be benefited. Connectivity is essential, but it should be in our interest. It must not be done at the cost of our interest."

Criticising the government, he said the government kept mum on sharing water of the transboundary rivers and border killings.

"Sheikh Hasina has completely failed to secure anything from India. This has happened due to the subservient foreign policy of the government. This government has deliberately made Bangladesh dependent on India."

**KHALEDA'S CONDITION STABLE**  
Talking about the health of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, Fakhrul said her condition was "stable" following the installation of a pacemaker in her heart on Sunday.

"So far I know until this [yesterday] morning, she was shifted to a cabin with CCU facilities."

The BNP leader said all arrangements were made by Khaleda's family to send her abroad for treatment, but the prime minister turned down the application seeking permission in this regard.

Amid such a situation, the party's standing committee expressed concern over Khaleda's deteriorating health, Fakhrul said.

He said the BNP chief's imprisonment is "solely motivated by political vengeance". The BNP standing committee members deem this as unconstitutional and unlawful, he added.

Fakhrul alleged that Khaleda was sentenced and imprisoned on false charges as the government's primary objective was to remove her from politics.

He said the BNP standing committee also observed that the "illegitimate government is systematically preventing Khaleda from receiving advanced treatment abroad with an aim to kill her and consolidate its power".

## Will implement Teesta project

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to brief the media about the outcome of her June 21-22 state visit to India, report BSS and UNB.

Responding to a query from a journalist, the premier, however, said her government will accept either a Chinese or an Indian proposal for the Teesta Master Plan Project considering which one would be the most beneficial for the country.

"We have taken up the Teesta project. China and India have put forward separate proposals to implement the project.

"But we must consider which proposal will be beneficial for the people, how much loan we will take and how much we will have to repay after the completion of the project, and also the capability of repaying the loan," Hasina continued.

China has completed a physical survey on the Teesta project while India wants to carry out another one, she said.

The PM said India has expressed its willingness to send a technical team to Bangladesh in this regard and Bangladesh will sit with the team.

"We will accept that survey which would be more suitable and beneficial for us."

In her written speech, Hasina said, "We discussed renewal of the Ganges River Water Sharing Agreement and India's assistance in the Teesta River Water Management and Water Conservation Project in Bangladesh. However, this has no link with the long-standing Teesta water sharing issue.

"We will implement the whole Teesta project with assistance from India, and we have got assurances from India in this regard," she said.

The Teesta project involves dredging the river, building strong embankments and a water reservoir, setting up townships and industries on the banks of the river, and irrigation.

Replying to another query about a news on West Bengal Chief Minister

Mamata Banerjee's objection to Indian government's move over the sharing of Teesta and Ganges waters with Bangladesh "bypassing her", Hasina said she does not want to make any comment on the issue as it is solely India's internal matter.

The premier, however, said she has a good relationship with all political parties in India, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Mamata.

She said she particularly has a good relationship with Sonia Gandhi and their children, and the family members of late Indian president Pranab Mukherjee.

About balancing Bangladesh's relations with India and China, Hasina said there is nothing to balance as her government is following the foreign policy - "Friendship to all, malice to none".

"India is very important for Bangladesh as they along with the freedom fighters shed blood for the independence of Bangladesh during the Liberation War in 1971," she said.

There are many things to be learnt from China about how a country can be developed, the PM said. "We maintain relations considering all these aspects."

She said she does not see any problem with maintaining relations with both India and China.

Hasina said those who say that her government is selling Bangladesh off to India have already sold themselves to India. "They criticise India publicly and flatter it secretly or they were the agents of Pakistan in 1971."

She said everyone should keep in mind that India was the only allied force in the world which left a country they helped liberate.

Talking about rail transit to India, the premier said everyone should keep in mind that she does not sell off Bangladesh as her party liberated the country.

She said Bangladesh and India are resuming rail connectivity which is

beneficial for trade and commerce and socio-economic development of the two nations.

She came down heavily on those who criticise rail connectivity by describing it as an attempt to sell off the country.

The premier said, "Look at Europe where there are no borders. Is one country selling itself to another there? Every country is sovereign."

She questioned if Bangladesh would keep its doors shut.

Hasina said some people became greedy and made so much money that they could not keep the money at home, and thus they had to flee the country to keep the money abroad.

"What is the benefit if someone has to leave the country after making money?" she added.

Termining her India visit very successful, Hasina in her written speech said, "The visit was short but very fruitful. I think this visit will play a far-reaching role in strengthening the existing excellent relations between India and Bangladesh."

She said that the visit opened new avenues of cooperation for the socioeconomic development of the people of the two neighbouring countries.

"Bangladesh India relations have grown to a unique height over the last 15 years. The people of both countries are enjoying the benefits."

Hasina said she discussed with Modi politics and security, peaceful and secured border management and curbing border casualty to 'zero' level, trade and connectivity, sustainable management of common rivers and water sharing, energy, regional and multilateral cooperation, among other issues of mutual interest.

She said Modi assured her that Bangladesh is at the centre of India's Neighbourhood First, Act East, and "Sea and Indo-Pacific" policies.

The PM said she invited Modi to visit Bangladesh as soon as possible at his convenience.

## ACC quizzes 8 officials

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An ACC team led by its Deputy Director Md Hafizul Islam, head of the enquiry team formed to investigate the graft allegations against the former police chief, quizzed the officials at its headquarters in the capital for over three hours yesterday, said officials.

On June 13, the anti-graft body sent letters to passport officials - Md Mohsin Islam, Abu Md Motalab Hossain, Abdul Jalil Mondol, Munshi Mueed Ikram, Abdullah Al Mamun, Abu Naeem Masum, Saidur Rahman,

and Subas Chandra Roy - for quizzing. Benazir and his family members had skipped the ACC's questioning over allegations that they amassed huge wealth through illegal means.

On May 28, the ACC issued a notice, asking Benazir to appear at its office on June 6, and his wife and two daughters on June 9.

In separate letters, they requested the ACC to defer the quizzing by 15 days.

The anti-graft body then asked Benazir to appear on June 23 and his family members on June 24.

## Matiur used clout

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The Anti-Corruption Commission finally launched an inquiry into his wealth a few days ago. At least four complaints were filed with the graft watchdog against him over the years, but the ACC did not launch a probe before.

On Sunday, he was transferred to the Internal Resources Division of the finance ministry.

Two NBR chairmen failed to have him transferred before.

During the caretaker government rule in 2007, then NBR chairman Badiur Rahman transferred Matiur from the Chattogram Customs House to the VAT Commissionerate in Rajshahi.

During a TV talk show recently, Badiur said, "As the NBR chairman, I ordered the transfer of Matiur. After the order was issued, Matiur visited my office and even went to my home to meet me. But I did not meet him. Later, I was surprised by what happened."

Badiur said then army chief Moeen U Ahmed and three other army officials had called him to stop the transfer.

"I did not cancel the order," he said, adding, "I told the army chief that transfer me if necessary and bring Matiur back, but I will not change the order."

And this is exactly what happened. Badiur was transferred elsewhere and Matiur returned to Chattogram

Customs House within a month.

In July 2022, NBR Chairman and Senior Secretary of Internal Resources Department Abu Hena Md Rahmatul Muneem also failed to have Matiur transferred.

An order was issued to transfer Matiur again to the Rajshahi VAT Commissionerate from the Customs, Excise, and VAT Appellate Tribunal. He did not even join his new post in Rajshahi, and within 15 days a new order was issued cancelling his transfer.

NBR officials said in February that year, the government appointed Matiur as a director of Sonali Bank without the consent of the NBR chairman or clearance from the tax authority.

They claimed that, for this reason, Matiur was among 13 officials who were transferred as part of routine.

While the 12 others joined their new work places, Matiur did not. So strong were his connections and influence that he could have his transfer order cancelled, the officials said on condition of anonymity.

This paper has copies of the transfer orders.

The government on Monday removed Matiur from the Sonali Bank board of directors.

Following an ACC appeal, the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka issued a travel ban on Matiur and two of his family members.

## Assange set to be freed

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embassy in London as he fought accusations of sex crimes in Sweden and battled extradition to the US, where he faced 18 criminal charges.

The US government viewed him as a reckless villain who had endangered the lives of agents through WikiLeaks' mass release of secret US documents - the largest security breaches of their kind in US military history.

But to free press advocates and his supporters, which includes world leaders, celebrities and some prominent journalists, he is a hero for exposing wrongdoing and alleged war crimes, and was persecuted for embarrassing US authorities.

Assange is due to be sentenced to 62 months of time already served at a hearing in Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands, at 9:00 am local time.

The US territory in the Pacific was chosen due to Assange's opposition to travelling to the mainland US and for its proximity to Australia, prosecutors said.

Australian-born Assange left Belmarsh maximum security jail in the early hours of Monday, before being bailed by the London High Court and later boarding a flight, his wife, Stella Assange said. He was currently on a stopover in Bangkok, she said.

"I feel elated," Stella, who flew to Australia from London on Sunday with the couple's two children, told Reuters. "I also feel worried ... Until

it's fully signed off, I worry, but it looks like we've got there."

A video posted on X by Wikileaks showed Assange dressed in a blue shirt and jeans signing a document before boarding a private jet. After the hearing in Saipan, Assange will fly to Canberra where he will arrive today, his wife said.

He had recently won permission to appeal against the approval of his US extradition and the case was due to be heard at London's High Court next month, a factor that Stella Assange said helped galvanise talks over a deal.

The Australian government, led by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, has been pressing US President Joe Biden for Assange's release but declined to comment on the legal proceedings as they were ongoing.

"There is nothing to be gained by his continued incarceration and we want him brought home to Australia," Albanese said in the country's parliament.

WikiLeaks came to prominence in 2010 after it released hundreds of thousands of classified US military documents on Washington's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq along with swaths of diplomatic cables.

The trove of more than 700,000 documents included battlefield accounts such as a 2007 video of a US Apache helicopter firing at suspected insurgents in Iraq, killing a dozen people including two Reuters news staff. That video was released in 2010.